

THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR: RESHAPING A NEW PUBLIC SECTOR IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT, TECHNOLOGY AND COMPETITIVENESS: THE POSSIBLE CHALLENGES FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN TERMS OF THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PUBLIC POLICIES

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Article 1 of a 5 part series of articles concerning public sector reform, public management and governance, with particular reference to Africa

ABSTRACT

This paper draws on a series of articles written by a cross section of academics including the economic Research Working paper series of 2005 as outlined by the African Development Bank. It is proposed to break down this presentation in a series of five articles. On the other hand these papers do not pretend to capture all of the subtle nuances of the complexity of the title of the paper. In the first part of the five part series, an overview of public sector management in Africa will be undertaken on the basis of situating the subject matter for purposes of greater understanding and intervention by governments. The second paper will encompass the political economy of public policies in terms of their distortions to agricultural and food markets. In the third paper the authors will review the challenges of technology, globalization, and competitiveness from international perspectives as challenges for developing countries. The fourth paper will discuss the possibilities of reshaping and engineering a possible new public sector for developing countries by reviewing the work of Stephan, F. Jooste's working paper of 2008. The fifth paper of the series will attempt to look at public sector management reforms in Africa. The final or sixth paper will focus upon public sector management reforms in Africa and in so doing will focus on the lessons learned. In crystallizing this series of six articles, it is hoped to synthesize the views of the various papers written by a set of different authors and to this end draw into the discussion the views of the authors, their experience and observations over time as public servants in the Republic of South Africa.

Key Words: Public Sector, Management Politicization, Theoretical Paradigms, Public – Private Partnerships, Accountability, Corruption, Privatization, Distortions, Advancing Economies, Agricultural Policies, Structural Economic Policies, Policy Instruments Restructuring, Economic Growth

INTRODUCTION

It has been recorded that the public sector in African countries was and is expected to spearhead socio – economic development in order to reduce poverty. This has proved to be an exercise in futility and has been largely ineffective. This ineffectiveness has and is due to “excessive politicization, a lack of accountability, coupled with authoritarian tendencies and the inability to promote the public interest.” (Aye, 2005: iii). The ineffectiveness therefore calls for a

redefinition of the role of public sector. This is exemplified by the ineptness of the public sector in many countries in respect to service delivery in many African countries including South Africa. This is exacerbated by inefficient public servants, nepotism, corruption and political patronage which fundamentally ignore constitutional principles and the rule of law. All of this therefore negates socio – economic development of countries. A further problematic in Africa is the all embracing fact of war, the fluid political problems in terms of local and international policies followed by some African countries. There is thus a direct correlation to ineffective governance which faces states and their bureaucracies in addressing the challenges. In this regard Ayee points out that some of the issues that need attention are:

- “The evolving and existing paradigms and their relevance;
- The inability to promote development;
- Public sector reforms to improve state capacity and outcomes;
- The promotion of accountability and to deal with corruption decisively; and
- The problems in aid management and coordination in Africa as a whole.
- Possible policy options in addressing the problems and challenges confronting public sector management.”

It is obvious that after the era of imperialism, colonialism, apartheid and oppression and at independence of African countries beginning with Ghana in 1957 under its first President, Sir Aboobaker Tafawa Balewa, the public sector was regarded as the conduit and pivot to promote socio – economic development. “Therefore, the basic function of the public sector, which comprises a number of large but vibrant institutions for the making, promulgation of rules and regulations and in respect to decisions of various kinds is to provide goods and services in the interest of the citizens at large as compared to business management” (Karodia, 2013 4; Haque, 2001: 65). “The ineffectiveness of governance coupled with the economic crisis of the late 1970’s, 1980’s and the current prolonged economic recession that began in 2008, requires a redefinition of the role of the state, their bureaucracies, and institutions, in reality the entire public sector (Karodia, 2008: 28; Fiszbein, 2000: 163). By the late 1990’s there became a necessity for a market – friendly economy and, this implied a reduced role of the state in national economic management because the state, was required to now provide an enabling environment for private sector economic activities by providing economic policy reforms and legal and regulatory frameworks. Much of the interventions required are beyond the capabilities of many developing countries. For example, “good governance programmes that are suggested by donors in many forms and range from conducive political, legal and economic environments, protect vulnerable people, protect immigrants, improve efficiency, empower people and usher in democracy and decentralize government as opposed to centralization of power, close the gap between the rich and the poor and so on (World Bank, 1997; UNDP, 1995 and 1997; Campbell et al; 1991; Nickson, 1995; Peterson; Collins, 2000 in Ayee, 2005: 1). In many instances these aspects have not been fulfilled by some – called democratically elected governments in Africa because of a lack of political legitimacy and incompetent state administrations, for example, in the former homelands of South Africa (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei), Zimbabwe, Egypt, countries in North Africa and other parts of Africa. The inability of states to regulate and manage public – private partnerships as well as sectors which have been fully privatized and this is clearly seen in South Africa with regards to its various parastatals.

It is against the above background that the strengths and challenges confronting the state, its institutions and the bureaucracy in relationship to socio – economic development must be addressed. According to Ayee (2005: 2) six broad questions must be addressed as follows:

- “What are the existing and evolving paradigms and their relevance to public sector management in Africa?”
- Why have African states failed to promote development?
- What were the public sector reforms and their outcomes?
- How effective are the strategies utilized to combat corruption and promote accountability?
- What are the issues and problems in aid management in Africa?
- What are the possible policy options for the future”?

There is no doubt that since African independence in 1951, a host of theoretical frameworks have emerged and in many ways these initiatives have influenced public sector management in Africa. These include New Public Management, which was introduced in South Africa by the Mbeki government and did not meet with much success, like many other African countries. The NPM set the neo – liberal policies of the capitalist classes and some European governments without understanding the complexities of development in these countries. Other policies were the public choice policy, development theory and the NPM. An attempt is made to discuss these policies below:

NEW INSTITUTIONAL ECONOMICS (NIE)

This can be termed the neo – institutional economics and is based on the assumption that various stands in modern economics prefigure the development of a theory of institutions that is highly relevant to the interpretation of the public sector (Ayee, 2005: 2; Williamson, 1986; Hodgson, 1988; Eggertson, 1990; Stiglitz, 1987). The theory argues that political institutions may be chosen rationally by means of deliberations about which rules are appropriate for the patterns of interaction in society. NIE involves two theories, namely, the agency theory; and transaction theory.

Agency Theory

The theory formalizes assumptions about the distribution of property rights and information in the writing of contracts that define organizations. It deals with the design of these contracts and, focuses on the relationship between principals and agents who exercise authority on their behalf. The principal – agent relationship is constitutive of state institutions, in particular, public policy making in democracy. In the policy process and the implementation stages there is an attempt of the population as the principal to monitor the efforts of politicians and bureaucracies as the agents to live up to the terms of the contract agreed upon. The best agents must be selected and induce them to behave in a desired manner. There are problems that arise within this relationship which must be sorted out. No one can be confident that a correct person has been selected for a job and often employers tend to hire lower quality applicants than desired, as seen in many African and South African governments continuously. This problem in South Africa is exacerbated by people who have to be belonging to the ruling party. The concept of deployment of incompetent and unqualified comrades, patronage and jobs for pals is the order of the day, this does not allow for remedial action, disciplinary action for poor performance and therefore underperformance is not detected and if detected there is protection of the employee from higher authorities in the political arena. “This is referred to the “moral hazard” problem and therefore management is difficult (White, 1985).

The principal – agent theory has a number of advantages. It is a method for dealing with the transaction costs that arise in collective action; it allows dealing and analyzing a number of

policy problems with an integrated framework, such as institutional choice (Lane, 1993; Weiner and Vining, 1996). The double principal - agent relationship between the electorate, government and administration is more relevant than the distinction between politics and administration (Lane, 1993). However, the theory does not explain some salient and important administrative issues because markets themselves have imperfections. On the supply side government often has few choices in purchasing services. In a number of supplies required government cannot call on more than a few suppliers and, therefore, these suppliers enjoy a monopoly and therefore this must be solved by government and suppliers in monopoly markets. Second, the market is further distorted on the demand side because government often is the only purchaser. As Ayee (2005: 4) points out that in Ghana "farmers must only sell cocoa to the government" and therefore government in this case becomes a monopoly. In Botswana a number of commodities cannot be imported in the agricultural sector because this is regulated by government in favour of local suppliers. The so - called strategic sectors of the economy, like water, electricity, mining, arms and so on in most African countries are the monopoly of the central government. The theory is based on power based on market behaviour "with principals and agents seeking to develop an acceptable exchange and neglects" (Perrow, 1986: 230 -1. Parsons (1960: 41) calls it the central phenomenon of organizations and thus neglects the considerable complexity in the environment of agencies and the many cross - cutting political pressures on administrators." The mathematical models could theoretically capture these complexities but according to Ayee (1994: 4) "it would be unrealistic to think that the full range of power relationships facing public administrators could be modeled in equations.

Four organizational goals are far more dynamic and evolutionary than the static principal - agent model tends to capture. Members of legislatures may change their minds about which goals administrators should emphasize. Decentralization policies are often modified because organizations and bureaucracies are learning organizations. In intergovernmental grant programmes it's a question of what works or does not and who takes responsibility. While dynamic goals theoretically are possible to the model, they move far beyond the static principal agent theory and enter into a realm of enormous complexity. Finally, it must be recognized and appreciated that the principal - agent structure of the state is characterized by ambiguity, opportunistic behaviour, moral hazards and adverse selection. It is therefore urgent that institutional mechanisms be found that would limit the range of opportunistic behaviour as well as the dangers of moral hazard and adverse selection. Transaction costs must be factored into the equation in respect to the degree of freedom of the agent. The actual state of the environment of public policy must always be considered.

Transaction Theory

The focus of transaction cost theory is the contract. It views the parties attempting to engage in exchange / transaction as contracting both the terms of the exchange and their execution, unlike the agency theory. The theory focuses on the role of the state in defining the basics of contractual arrangements, which depend on existing technologies and natural endowments. As these change, new contracts come into being in which the state plays an important role in minimizing transaction costs by institutional innovation. It is therefore obvious that, institutional arrangements in the public sector may constitute which may be changed in terms of rational equilibrium, contrary to what the sociological version of institutionalism implies. The contracting process is costly. It includes not only the structuring, monitoring, bonding, and residual loss costs of agency theory but also the costs of negotiation. Three important problems contribute to the costs of contracting:

- “A cooperation problem in the absence of a contract;
- A division problem which arises when contracts offer different relative gains;
- A defection problem because of non – compliance in the interest of different parties” (Heckathorn and Maser, 1987).

One of the central questions of political economy is how governments can make credible commitments to convince people that their investments will not be appropriated. The question of what should be included when government is said to have minimized transaction costs by reforming institutions like property rights or local government structures is the issue at hand.

Public Choice Theory

It is a strong variant of the rational choice theory and is concerned with the provision of public goods that are delivered by government rather than the market. The political society is made up of self – interested groups and tends to form around relatively narrow issues by seeking specific self – interested goals. In other words, at the core and heart of the public choice theory is the self – interest maximization hypothesis. According to Buchanan et al, 1978; Buchanan, 1987 and Lane 1993 the public choice model is important for a number of reasons. It offers a coherent explanation for non – rational decision – making by governments, why should governments adopt public policies and programmes which are harmful to society? The solution is simple to this problem and it therefore calls for limiting the activities that fall under the regulatory power of the state. Secondly, it explains why ‘the public interest’ is not achieved. Third, by focusing on the power of vested interests, it demonstrates the barriers to reform because of pre – existing policies and by political relationships that they engender. It explains rent seeking behaviour, policy choices that are detrimental to society and offers a way of understanding the constraints on policy changes that develop over time.” In spite of its relevance, it is limited for the following reasons:

- “It fails to explain how policy changes or how policy can lead to beneficial outcomes and policy elites represent vested social interests and tend to overtly apply it to their rent – seeking advantage, in order to maximize political support.
- It cannot explain why, how and when reform occurs except through politicians and bureaucrats who often display politically irrational behaviour for unexplained reasons.
- Not much is known about how their motivations are developed or altered over time” (Grindle and Thomas, 1991; Lane, 1993; Turner and Hulme, 1997).

Development Theory

It is a multidimensional process that is motivated by the desire to reduce poverty and inequality, accelerate economic growth and renewal of social structures (Todaro, 2000; Bryant and White, 1982). In fact the development theory has been expounded widely in the literature and ranges with dealing with elementary freedoms, occurrence of famines, widespread hunger, government inefficiency, patronage, corruption, gender issues and their neglect, the environment and to sustainability of human lives and so on. The problems of development continue to confront African countries from independence to the present and are a serious challenge even today. Given this debate a number of issues have emerged that encompass development. These include the economic perspective of development; the dependency perspective; the basic needs perspective, and the development administrative perspective. These encompass and deal with the following:

- The Modernization / Economic perspective;
- Dependency perspective;
- Basic needs perspective;

- Development Administrative perspective; and
- New Public Management.

NOTE: {The above aspects must be read by the reader independently and the work of the following authors must be referenced in order to get a better understanding of the different aspects of development theory The authors to be consulted and referenced are: Myiant, 1965: 11; Currie, 1978: 2; Rostow, 1959; Bryant and White, 1982; Islam and Henault, 1979); Parsons, 1951; Webster, 1984; Frank, 1971; Rodney, 1972; Amin, 1972; Cohen 1973; Frank, 1971; Hyden, 1983; Leys, 1975 Dwivedi, 1994:4 – 5; Stone 1965; Riggs, 1970; Esman, 1988; United Nations, 1975; Turner and Hulme, 1997: 13; Dwivedi and Nef, 1982; Sweldlow, 1975}.

REVIEW OF THE STATE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

It is obvious and necessary to situate the subject matter from the impact of colonialism, because, it has left a legacy that created conditions to development of personalized and leadership – dependent political systems that are prevalent in African countries that still have a profound impact upon Africa, as a continent. It resulted in social fragmentation, economic backwardness and international vulnerability and a dependency on former colonial masters. African leaders therefore began a frontal attack on under – development for purposes of growth and poverty reduction. Capitalism was viewed primarily with European colonialism and therefore exposed African leadership to socialism, which led to centralized development. A strong central government was regarded a prerequisite to national unity and modernization of African states. This fragmentation and ethnicity brought about by the balkanization of the African states by the colonial powers, which ignored ethnic and cultural factors in determining national boundaries. This was consistent with the structure and habits of the colonial administrative state and, therefore the emphasis was on centralization, a feature of both Eastern and Western block development. This complimented the expectations of international assistance organizations for rational planning, management, and negotiation of assistance programmes.

At the economic level, colonialism’s centralizing impact can also be seen in the economic conditions most African states faced at independence. In addition, colonialism reinforced centralism and elitism and activities were generally concentrated in a single city. This led to administration and governance strategies pursued by African leaders after independence and until the 1980’s when structural adjustment programmes and their conditions made them in applicable. The five strategies that were pursued were as follows:

- “The replacement of competitive politics by one or no part systems and therefore, little or no opposition. This was dedicated to national unity;
- A reliance on unified bureaucratic structures, accountable to the central government for purposes of production and services, determined by a national plan;
- No significant role was allowed for local government;
- Executive authority was maximized at the expense of the legislature, judiciary, regional governments and other institutions;
- The national budget was the primary source of funding in respect to development and was to be raised from the largest sectors, either agriculture and mining, and so on (Wunsch, 1995b).

Present day or modern African countries were created by colonial governments and national boundaries were pre – determined by the colonial power. This brought about antagonism among the inhabitants and everything was based on ethnic lines. Development was uneven. Mission schools proliferated while others received no Western – type education. There was no national

identity because ethnicity was reinforced by the colonial masters and therefore there was no common nationhood. Colonialism was an alien imposition on African societies and it was authoritarian in nature, with an intensive bureaucratic presence. The colonial masters were seen by their subjects as illegitimate and predatory. The colonial inheritance created basic problems in the creation of effective governments during the post – independence period. These strategies stabilized the emerging predatory elites and thus they were less effective in building sound governing structures. “Thus governments were unable to construct effective public authority. There was simply no character of relations between rulers and those ruled” (chazzan et al; 1999). Strife increased among ethnic communities much to the detriment of newly independent African states. New governments faced the challenges of growth and structural transformation in low income agrarian economies. They were thus unable to deal with poverty and inequality, a situation that persists into the 21st century and has had adverse effects upon African development generally. This was further exacerbated by African leaders pursuing short – term destructive policies and programmes, especially in the economic sector and has thus stymied development.

It has to be noted that unlike Asian state elites of the same period were development oriented as opposed to African elites that were motivated by more by political and personal concerns than by economic and social development. They were after independence concerned with staying in power and building an economic base for themselves. “This led to amassing wealth amidst a sea of poverty and they continue to play a dominant role in post independence economies (As seen in South Africa). Thus we see in Africa since independence of the first countries desperate struggles to attain or maintain state power. In reality regime transition from colonial domination was intensive liberalization without democratization (Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa and a host of other African countries). These countries and in many cases the leaders of revolutionary struggles have consolidated power by intimidation and repression of political opponents. The use of authoritarian means has become the order of the day to maintain power. One part systems have been consolidated with autocratic practices, with a single leader and oligarchic power. It thus becomes difficult for civil societies of African nations to counterbalance state dominance. Recent years have seen some degree of liberalization with multiparty elections, a free but restricted media and engagement in legislatures, but this is not good enough to consolidate democracy in Africa” (Clapham, 1996; Bratton and Hyden, 1992; Ayee, 2001). Another issue was the reliance on patronage aimed at consolidating power and resources were and are disbursed according to party political lines. In fact the distribution of business opportunities and jobs and positions are the preserve of the elite. In Africa ethnic identities have comprised the key bases for building coalitions with favoured constituencies. In order to enhance patronage resources for distribution, Africa’s new rulers “extended the scope of direct government – involvement in the economy, by allowing regimes to channel economic resources to targeted social groups within the economy (Bonne, 1992: 16). This was a means of consolidating power, and in many countries prices collapsed in the 1970’s, but economic reform programmes in the 1980’s initiated by the Breton Wood institutions brought about cuts in state spending and reduction in public benefits that could be exchanged for political support. However, this was used as a mechanism by African leaders to maintain power. It must be acknowledged however that, patronage policies has been integral to post colonial efforts to maintain political control in poor, ethnically diverse peasant societies. These relationships have proved economically damaging.

In fact during the 1960’s, the civil service in Africa grew at a rate of 7 percent per annum, a rate that doubled the number of employees in ten years (Gordon, 2001). The result was that by 1970

over 60 percent of all African wage earners were government employees. This resulted in African governments by 1980, that at least half of all government expenditures were put into salaries of government employees. The expansion of state owned enterprises was phenomenal during the first two decades. It was the rise of “state capitalism’ or a ‘maximalist state’ which stood above society, controlling all aspects of life and business and in charge of the ‘commanding heights’ of the economy” (Olowu, 2003: 103). At that time Africa saw that the development of the rural areas was sacrificed to finance patrimonial states by means of “patron – client networks and those in positions of power and their patrons moved to use their influence for economic profit” (Young 1988). The state based elite used their profits that are important for an understanding of a political economy of the decline of African states. The money accrued was used for conspicuous consumption of luxury items. “According to Sandbrook (1985), very little investment took place that created substantial employment or boosted industrial capacity or, on development of African countries in general. All of this created a momentum for Africa’s decline and crisis .Gross Domestic Product fell substantially during this period.

The discussion in this paper will not be complete if the issues raised by Ayee (2005), in respect of the phases of modernization of the state are not captured very briefly. In undertaking this very briefly only the phases will be enumerated and no tangible discussion will be attempted. These phases are as follows:

- Phase 1: Reforms of the 1980’s. This captures donor funding and the solutions offered in respect to development.
- Phase 2: Reforms of the 1990’s. It captures downsizing and restructuring of state services. The issue of public sector reform using the New Public Management was introduced by African governments much to the peril of development and economic growth.
- Phase 3: Reforms after the World Development Report 1997. Introduced because of the World Bank’s recognition in its 1997 World Development Report that, having an effective, responsive and legitimate state was crucial for sustaining an effective market economy (World Bank, 1997).
- The results from modernization of the state encompass: Reforms in bureaucracy, civil service and administration; Issues in pay and reward systems; Training and capacity development; Technology innovations to improving public – service efficiency and E – government.
- Bringing government closer to the people – the challenges of administrative decentralization

NOTE: It is essential that the reader attempts to research and read the above phases, in order to glean for himself the issues that permeate the development discourse and public management history in respect to Africa’s under – development and the dependency debates. It will also be necessary to study the other issues enumerated above in order to complete the different paradigms.

REVIEW OF FISCAL, BUDGET AND TAX SYSTEMS

There is no doubt that even in the 21st century the political economy of revenue mobilization, its application and understanding in most developing and African countries is a neglected area of study. In spite of this situation, there is a continuing debate over tax collection arrangements in African countries. “The fiscal crisis facing states is mainly the result of low revenue tax bases. African countries lack the extractive capacity or rather the ability to raise revenues to pay for expenses in terms of implementing its policies, in order to achieve goals (Brautigam, 1996: 83).

Put in other words African states “tax reforms have achieved limited success in increasing state accountability to citizens and tax payers” (Rakner, 2003). One of the most important functions of the state which determines its legitimacy is to raise revenue to support its policies and programmes. “The Breton Woods institutions indicate that reforms must be aimed at making the tax structure more neutral; simplification and streamlining legal and administrative tax operations; and, the enhancing of revenue collections; and further, to promote horizontal equity in tax systems over vertical equity” (Lledo et al, 2004).

TAXING THE INFORMAL SECTOR

Like South Africa, African countries have not made inroads with regards this important variable and much revenue is lost to the informal sector because governments overlook the importance of the informal sector. In addition immigrants are able to absolve themselves from the tax base by not declaring their business interests. These immigrants use the facilities of the state and have access to health and education at almost no cost to themselves. This also applies to home grown businesses by citizens of states. This, therefore, requires an intervention strategy on Value Added Tax (VAT) by introducing a tax regimen that is a neutrally based consumption tax system. The reduction of discretionary costs of indirect tax to choices among inputs and modes of production, as well as disincentives to formal activity, raising revenue cynically referred to as a ‘cash machine’ by Toye and Moore (1998:80), simplifying tax administrative procedures, widening the tax base of the entire tax system, and promoting equity and efficiency in tax administration, must be seriously looked into. However, very little progress has been made because of the tax – exempt status in many African countries, as concerns the informal sector. “This has resulted in the loss of large revenue due to the state whereby the informal sector is allowed to prosper in a sanctuary sheltered from taxation” (Ayee, 2005). “The first constraint is administrative because the tax bureaucracies of African countries generally do not have the resources or for that matter the personnel capacity to implement, monitor or enforce tax laws” (Stella, 1993; Kiser and Baker, 1994). The other issue is the reality that cash transactions dominate the informal sector. Observation in South Africa indicates that there is an indifference to formal accounting procedures because of high levels of illiteracy and the shortage of affordable accounting services. The state does nothing in respect of training and intervening. It is also difficult to enforce compliance and the small amounts of tax that would be payable presents a nightmare for collection. This should not be used as an excuse by the tax collection agencies of African countries. The second constraint is political because the informal sector is a potential vote bank for politicians, who retain their popularity by overlooking the evils of the system and therefore pressurize the law enforcing agencies to drastically reduce enforcement. Such a system therefore operates in many African countries because the informal sector forms a substantial part of the polity and economy.

The improper use of public finance results in fiscal crisis and governance crisis which weakens state institutions and undermines economic development. The judicious use of public finance encourages citizens to pay taxes; it brings about an effective public financial system and allows for the liberalization of exchange rates, trade and payment systems by limiting the space for political and administrative discretion in the allocation of state resources. It is not possible in a paper of this nature to delve into every subtle nuance that encompasses public sector reform in respect to governance regimens, except to briefly discuss the reinforcing of core public service values, institution building and to conclude on some implications for public sector management.

CORE PUBLIC SERVICE VALUES

The above strategy is important because these values will facilitate public sector management. According to the World Public Sector Report (United Nations, 2001: 124). These values are:

- Reevaluation of learning, integrity and competence;
- Enforcing the merit system and affirmative action in favour of minorities and historically disadvantaged groups;
- Respect of citizens' needs;
- Low tolerance for crime and corruption including laxity;
- Reward loyalty, accomplishment and merit;
- Neutrality of the civil service, high performance, motivation, integrity and professionalism of the public service; and
- Recognition of cross – cultural and international links for improving the professional image and performance of the public service.

INSTITUTIONAL BUILDING

The United Nations (2001) has indicated core public service values cannot either be established or fostered overnight or without any regard to the political, social and cultural environment in which the public service operates without appropriate structures, legislative policy frameworks designed to tap, attract, retain, develop and motivate the needed men and women using their skills productively and effectively. An urgent requirement and priority will be to assist African countries in building and refining these structures and policy frameworks. All of this needs to be undertaken with respect and dignity keeping in mind the distinct legal and political traditions of different countries, which vary greatly and widely. One size cannot fit all countries. However, the need to professionalize human resources management and development in the public services of African countries must become an imperative.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Observations reveal that that building a public service in African countries is a difficult task which is time consuming. Their success will depend on politicians and the bureaucracies that run countries. This will determine economic growth, investment, competitiveness. Waste and consumption of public resources must be eliminated at all costs. Corruption must be dealt with and brought down to controllable levels and punitive action must be enforced. Reform must be backed adequate administrative and institutional capacity and instilled into a growth strategy together with an implementable industrialization policy and programme, in order to deal decisively with poverty, inequality and unemployment. The public service must become a learning organization, reforming and changing policies on a continuing basis. The public must be informed regularly about the directions that the public service is taking and why certain decisions are being implemented. There has to be open dialogue with all participants and interest groups, such that new policies can be rooted in African countries.

The second article of this five part series will deal with the political economy of public policies. It will deal with certain salient insights from the distortions to agricultural and food markets. The paper will draw upon the work of Kym Anderson, Gordon Rausser and Johan Swinnen that appeared as work conducted by the World Bank in May of 2013.

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